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LANGUE AND PAROLE IN AMERICAN LINGUISTICS.

BY- LEVIN, SAMUEL R.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE IS CONSIDERED AND THE FORM WHICH ANY LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION SHOULD TAKE. THE AUTHOR EXAMINES THE INFLUENCE OF THE SWISS LINGUIST, FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE, ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN LINGUISTICS. THE QUESTION OF "MENTALISM" IN LINGUISTICS IS REDUCED TO THE PROBLEM OF WHETHER LINGUISTIC TREATMENT SHOULD BE CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE OBJECTIVE DATA (SPEECH UTTERANCES) OR WHETHER IT SHOULD BE CONCERNED ALSO WITH VARIOUS MENTAL PROCESSES. EDWARD SAPIR'S "MENTALISM" FORESHADOWED THE INTEREST IN THE MENTAL COMPONENT OF GRAMMAR WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE WORK OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LINGUISTS. CHOMSKY'S TRANSFORMATION THEORY IS VIEWED AS A RETURN, WITH MODIFICATIONS, TO THE BROADER CONCERN WITH "LANGUAGE" URGED BY DE SAUSSURE, AND PURSUED INDEPENDENTLY BY SAPIR. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE," VOLUME 1, 1965. (KL)

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SAMUEL R. LEVIN

LANGUE AND PAROLE IN AMERICAN LINGUISTICS

It is clear that recent developments in American linguistics have affected quite drastically many of the fundamentally held conceptions concerning both the nature of language structure and the form which any description of that structure should take. Obviously, these developments have a significance for linguistic theory. Quite apart from this question, however, these developments have a further significance in that, by providing an extension to the development of linguistic thought, they have at the same time extended the perspective by which we can judge and evaluate the historical growth of linguistics in America.[1] There have thus recently appeared a number of papers in which various aspects of American linguistic thought have been assessed in the light of this lengthened perspective.[2]

I

In this paper I propose to consider American linguistic development in its relation to de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. Like so many other of his contributions, this distinction of de Saussure's has never really figured at the center of American linguistic discussion. In those cases where it has been taken up, it has frequently been modified to conform with a conception of language which was conditioned by other factors. Before taking

[1] In taking up for consideration American linguistic development, I do not mean to suggest that it is any more significant than the linguistic development and practice in other parts of the world; the reason for the restriction is simply that the particular problem I wish to discuss here is especially germane to American linguistics.

[2] Among others: C. I. J. M. Stuart, 'Foreword' to Franz Boas, *Introduction to the Handbook of American Indian Languages* (Washington, D.C., n.d.); Paul M. Postal, 'Boas and the Development of Phonology: Comments Based on Iroquoian', *International Journal of American Linguistics* **30** (1964) 269–80; Karl V. Teeter, 'Descriptive Linguistics in America: Triviality vs. Irrelevance', *Word* **20** (1964) 197–206; Jerrold J. Katz, 'Mentalism in Linguistics', *Language* **40** (1964) 124–37; Noam Chomsky, 'Current Issues in Linguistic Theory', in *The Structure of Language*, (ed. by Jerry A. Fodor and Jerrold J. Katz), Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1964, pp. 50–118 (this is a revised and expanded version of Chomsky's Ninth Congress paper, 'The Logical Basis of Linguistic Theory', *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists* (ed. by Horace G. Lunt), The Hague 1964; especially relevant for our purposes is the expanded discussion, pp. 50–62, of the historical currents which are significant for the evaluation of contemporary developments). One might also mention here the papers presented to a symposium entitled 'History of Linguistics' at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1962, published in *Anthropological Linguistics* V. **1** (1963) (cited by Teeter, *op. cit.*, fn. 1).

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up the relation of American linguistics to the notions of *langue* and *parole*, it will thus not be out of place to consider briefly de Saussure's significance in the development of American linguistic thought. The curiously anomalous position which he occupies has been expressed as follows: "The position of de Saussure in linguistics today is very much like that of Ibsen in the drama. Only now and then is he spoken of, and then in a ritualistic way. The innocent bystander or the neophyte gets the impression that this or that detail derives from him and that all else, for which he is customarily not cited, is independent of him. Actually the inverse of this would be nearer the truth. His contribution is rather a whole mode of thought, a whole structure of interest and values, within which all the central discussions of linguistics today remain – only the marginal interests, such as glottochronology or information theory, escape this thought-world. On the other hand, most details of his doctrine have been replaced by others. Thus it is in general possible to say, of any single paragraph of a modern linguistic treatise, both 'This is de Saussure' and 'This is not de Saussure' with reference to the same doctrine."[3]

Naturally, it is hard to be certain about the presence or absence of "a whole mode of thought" or "a whole structure of interests and values" in any body of writings. It is my impression, however, that de Saussure's contributions were, as a matter of fact, adopted by American linguists in only a limited and highly selective way.[4] Which is perhaps no more than should be expected – except that a number of his ideas remained to be arrived at independently by American linguists. Sapir, who of all American linguists might have been expected to be most sympathetic to many of de Saussure's views, does not seem to mention him.[5] Bloomfield firmly adopted de Saussure's division into diachronic and synchronic linguistics, but in the case of several other of de

[3] In editor's comment following the paper by Rulon S. Wells, 'De Saussure's System of Linguistics', in *Readings in Linguistics* (ed. by Martin Joos), Washington, D.C. 1957, p. 18.

[4] I think that a fair estimate of the extent of his influence may be arrived at by a perusal of the volume *Readings in Linguistics*, which is a handy compendium of post-Bloomfieldian linguistics. In this volume, aside from Rulon S. Wells' 'De Saussure's System of Linguistics', which is an explicit discussion of the Swiss linguist's ideas, de Saussure is hardly in evidence. He or his ideas are mentioned in footnotes only three times. This may be compared to the ten or twelve references to Troubetskoy, for example. The reason for this disparity is no doubt connected with the fact that many of the articles in the collection deal with phonology, but this fact in itself is not without significance in the context of the present discussion. For another reference to the disregard which American linguists have displayed for de Saussure, see Einar Haugen, 'Directions in Modern Linguistics', *Language* **27** (1951), reprinted in *Readings in Linguistics*, p. 357.

[5] This statement is based on the absence of any reference to de Saussure in Sapir's *Language* (New York, 1921) and in *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality* (ed. by David G. Mandelbaum, Univ. of California Press 1951). The basic affinity between Sapir and de Saussure I take to lie in the "mentalism" of several of their respective leading ideas: in Sapir's case, in his notion of the psychological reality of the phoneme, in the ideas later elaborated as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and in certain more

Saussure's ideas, he seems either to have disregarded them or to have modified them to suit his own approach to language study.[6] In particular, Bloomfield's conception of *langue* and *parole*, especially of the former, were influenced by his non-mentalistic predilections. When, in his review of Sapir's *Language* he cites two "critical points" in which the "newer trend", represented by the *Cours*, affects linguistic study, they are the diachronic/synchronic division and the fact that "we are casting off our dependence on psychology, realizing that linguistics, like every science, must study its subject-matter in and for itself, working on fundamental assumptions of its own; that only on this condition will our results be of value to related sciences (especially, in our case, to psychology) and in the light of these related sciences in the outcome more deeply understandable. In other words, we must study people's habits of language – the way people talk – *without bothering about the mental processes that we may conceive to underlie or accompany these habits* (my italics, SRL). We must dodge this issue by a fundamental assumption, leaving it to a separate investigation, in which our results will figure as data alongside the results of the other social sciences."[7]

This statement of Bloomfield's would seem to represent not only his affirmation of de Saussure's dictum *la linguistique a pour unique et véritable objet la langue envisagée en elle-même et pour elle-même*[8], but also his interpretation of it. The fundamental problem is precisely in what does language consist (and the corollary problem of what is the proper subject-matter of linguistic analysis), and Bloomfield asserts that it is speech.[9] The same focus on speech is observable in his book *Language*, in the section where Bloomfield isolates the subject-matter of language study. After eliminating writing,

fundamental respects expressed in the quotations given by footnotes 21–23 of this paper; in de Saussure's case, in his conception of *langue*, his *rapports associatifs*, and such notions as the *faculté de langage* and the *conscience des sujets parlants*.

[6] That Bloomfield knew de Saussure's *Cours* very well is amply attested. Cf. the review cited in the following footnote and also the passages (two of which are cited below) quoted in Charles C. Fries, 'The Bloomfield 'School'', in *Trends in European and American Linguistics 1930–1960*, (ed. by C. Mohrmann, A. Sommerfelt, and J. Whatmough, Utrecht 1961, pp. 196–224). All of these references antedate Bloomfield's *Language* (New York 1933), in which he mentions de Saussure only in connection with the latter's espousal of descriptive studies (p. 19) and several times in the Notes. As Bloomfield developed and perfected his own approach to linguistic analysis, the influence of de Saussure seems to have diminished.

[7] *The Classical Weekly* **15** (1922) 18 (March) 142.

[8] *Cours de linguistique générale*, 4th ed., Paris 1949, p. 317.

[9] In his paper, *op. cit.*, Karl Teeter focuses attention on some of the assumptions (or lack thereof) which informed linguistic practice in the United States during the first half of the present century. Citing what he terms the post-Boasian and post-Bloomfieldian "fallacies", Teeter depicts how American linguistic practice, having shorn itself of anything that might pass for a theory of language or linguistics, proceeded to elevate to the status of theory the only thing left to it, namely, its methodological procedures. In the course

literature, philology, and usage, he introduces his well-known Jack and Jill model, in which the emphasis is squarely on the act of speech.[10] This same focus is also evident in other places.[11]

From the references given above, it would appear that for Bloomfield the subject-matter of linguistics is speech, i.e. *parole*. But we find other statements in his writings which produce a different impression. Thus we may compare the following quotations: "At any given time ('synchronously') the language of a community is to be viewed as a system of signals... This rigid system, the subject-matter of 'descriptive linguistics', as we should say, is *la langue*, the language."[12] In another place: "For Jespersen language is a mode of expression; its forms express the thoughts and feelings of speakers, and communicate them to hearers, and this process goes on as an immediate part of human life and is, to a great extent, subject to the requirements and vicissitudes of human life. For me, as for de Saussure (*Cours de linguistique générale*,[2] Paris, 1922) and, in a sense, for Sapir (*Language*, New York, 1922 [sic]), all this, de Saussure's *la parole*, lies beyond the power of our science. We cannot predict whether a certain person will speak at a given moment, or what he will say, or in what words and other linguistic forms he will say it. Our science can deal only with those features of language, de Saussure's *la langue*, which are common to all the speakers of a community, – the phonemes, grammatical categories, lexicon, and so on. These are abstractions, for they are only (recurrent) partial features of speech-utterances. The infant is trained to these features so thoroughly that after earliest childhood the variabilities of the human individual and the vicissitudes of human life no longer affect them. They form a rigid system, – so rigid that without any adequate physiologic information and with psychology in a state of chaos, we are nevertheless able to subject it to scientific treatment. A grammatical or lexical statement is at bottom an abstraction."[13]

In these two quotations Bloomfield explicitly states that it is *langue*, and not *parole*, which is the subject-matter of linguistics. But he also provides the means for reconciling what seems to emerge as an inconsistency in his views.

of the discussion, Boas is described as ultimately responsible for the rejection of the notion of language universals and Bloomfield for the repudiation of the significance of the mind in linguistic investigation. According to Teeter (p. 201), a consequence of the post-Bloomfieldian fallacy is that "there is no longer language but only speech".

[10] pp. 21 ff.

[11] See, for example, 'A Set of Postulates for the Science of Language', *Language* **2** (1926), reprinted in *Readings in Linguistics*, p. 26 and *Linguistic Aspects of Science*, Univ. of Chicago Press 1939, p. 6.

[12] Review of *Cours de linguistique générale* (2nd ed., Paris 1922) in *The Modern Language Journal*, **8** (1924) 317–9.

[13] Review of Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar*, (New York 1924) in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, **26** (1927) 444–6.

Langue is the aggregate of abstractions made from the phonological, grammatical, and lexical features which occur in speech-utterances. Being abstractions, they naturally do not occur as such; they must be educed from the material in which they occur, and this material is speech. In this view of *langue* we can also see the basis for casting the grammar of a language in the form of inventories, classes, lists, etc., in short, as a taxonomy of elements. It thus appears that for Bloomfield speech-utterances constitute the subject-matter of linguistics, and the description of this subject-matter, i.e. the grammar, consists in isolating the recurrent partial features – the phonemes, grammatical categories, and lexical items – which can be abstracted by analysis from the speech-utterances. The result of these procedures is then a description of *langue*.

II

Bloomfield seems to conceive of a grammar only as something which results from analysis; the notion of a grammar as something internalized by a speaker, a code localized in the brain, was a conception which was intellectually distasteful to him. Thus, while Bloomfield made allowance for unobserved utterances – in the so-called "predictive" power of the grammar – these new utterances were necessarily "regular", i.e. conformable to the utterance types already abstracted. The taxonomic grammar, while thus open, was essentially static. This was only to be expected of a grammar whose only goal was the analysis and arrangement of physical data.

Bloomfield's bias against mentalism in linguistic analysis is well known. It appears in various guises, however, and thus it can be discussed from several different angles. As Katz has pointed out, one aspect of Bloomfield's anti-mentalism is not necessarily inconsistent with an interest in the mental processes of language users. This aspect, which Katz calls a "theologized" conception of mentalism, regards the variability of human conduct as being caused by the presence in the human being of a "spirit", "will", or "mind".[14] Bloomfield expressly repudiated this attitude, and it is probably safe to say, that for purposes of their practice, few linguists are interested in or concerned with this type of mentalism. Another aspect of mentalism mentioned by Katz grows out of what Bloomfield regarded as the necessary limits imposed on any empirical science.[15] The methodologies of behaviorism, mechanism, operationalism, and physicalism all operate within the prescribed limits, where these limits are imposed so as to ensure verifiability of results; mentalism, however, falls outside. A third aspect of Bloomfield's anti-mentalism is connected with his feeling that psychology was in a state of such inconsistency

[14] Katz, *op. cit.*, 125.
[15] Katz, *op. cit.*, 125 f.

and disorder that its introduction into linguistic analysis would hinder far more than help the investigation.[16] In the context of this paper, however, the question of mentalism resolves itself simply into the question of whether linguistic description should be concerned only with objective data – in the form of speech-utterances – or whether it should be concerned also with various mental processes which a native speaker carries out in connection with his use of the language.

To an extent much smaller than is the practice among transformational linguists, but to an extent, nonetheless, de Saussure associated with *langue* a number of mental functions – in his conceptions of the sign, the *rapports associatifs*, the *faculté de langage*, as well as in other respects. For Bloomfield, however, even though he at times characterizes the aim of linguistic analysis as the description of *langue*, his conception of the latter does not admit of any mentalistic component. This fact can be ascertained from the quotations already cited. But the difference between him and de Saussure in this connection may also be inferred from a comparison of their respective models of what is involved in the speech act. In Bloomfield's model there are three events: the stimulus (S), the speech act, and the response (R).[17] As noted before, Bloomfield's emphasis is on the act of speech; but his discussion of S and R makes it clear, moreover, that he is not concerned with mentalism in the sense described above. He mentions physiology, behavior, and past experience in commenting on the "practical events" preceding and following the act of speech, but the only reference to mental activity is to such as may grow out of the past experience or relations between the speaker and hearer. There is no mention of any mental activity that might be connected with the encoding or decoding of the act of speech.[18] If we now compare de Saussure's model of the speech act, we find that the circuit is extended at each end, to provide for the association of mental concepts with acoustic images in the brain of the speaker and for the association of the acoustic images with mental concepts in the brain of the hearer. De Saussure points out that this phase of the speech act is psychological, as opposed to the passage of sound-waves from the mouth of the speaker to the ear of the hearer, which is physical.[19] Bloomfield writes in his review of the *Cours*: "Outside of the field of historical grammar, linguistics has worked only in the way of a desperate attempt to give a psychologic interpretation to the facts of language [and in the way of phonetics, an endless and aimless listing of the various sound-articulations of speech]. Now, de Saussure seems to have had no

[16] Cf. the review of Jespersen.
[17] *Language*, p. 23 f.
[18] *Language*, ch. 2.
[19] *Cours*..., p. 27 f.

psychology beyond the crudest popular notions [and his phonetics are an abstraction from French and Swiss-German which will not stand even the test of an application to English]. Thus he exemplifies, in his own person and perhaps unintentionally, what he proves intentionally and in all due form: that psychology [and phonetics] do not matter at all and are, in principle, irrelevant to the study of language."[20] Bloomfield is here probably referring to the absence in de Saussure's work of any general theory of psychology. But it is quite clear that de Saussure was interested in various psychological, viz. mental processes that a speaker and hearer carry out in engaging in the speech act. Bloomfield, however, was apparently not interested in psychology in either of these senses.

As has been remarked, Sapir does not seem to have been influenced directly by de Saussure – whereas Bloomfield obviously was. But on the question of the significance of mental phenomena for linguistic analysis Sapir is much closer to the position of de Saussure than is Bloomfield. For Sapir, as for de Saussure, an essential component, perhaps *the* essential component, of grammar consists in functions localized in the brain. Following are several quotations which illustrate his views: "Between the meaningful and unanalyzable word or word element and the integrated meaning of continuous discourse lies the whole complicated field of the formal procedures which are intuitively employed by the speakers of a language in order to build up aesthetically and functionally satisfying symbol sequences out of the theoretically isolable units. These procedures constitute grammar, which may be defined as the sum total of formal economies intuitively recognized by the speakers of a language."[21]

In another place: "The psychological problem which most interests the linguist is the inner structure of language, in terms of unconscious psychic processes, not that of the individual's adaptation to this traditionally conserved structure."[22]

Finally: "Our current psychology does not seem altogether adequate to explain the formation and transmission of such submerged formal systems as are disclosed to us in the languages of the world. It is usual to say that isolated linguistic responses are learned early in life and that, as these harden into fixed habits, formally analogous responses are made, when the need arises, in a purely mechanical manner, specific precedents pointing the way to new responses. We are sometimes told that these analogous responses are largely the result of reflection on the utility of the earlier ones, directly learned from the social environment. Such methods of approach see nothing in the problem of linguistic form beyond what is involved in the more and

[20] *The Modern Language Journal* **8** (1924) 318.
[21] *Selected Writings...*, p. 9 ("Language").
[22] *Selected Writings...*, p. 152 ("The Grammarian and his Language").

more accurate control of a certain set of muscles towards a desired end, say the hammering of a nail. I can only believe that explanations of this type are seriously incomplete and that they fail to do justice to a certain innate striving for formal elaboration and expression and to an unconscious patterning of sets of related elements of experience."

"The kind of mental processes that I am now referring to are, of course, of that compelling and little understood sort for which the name 'intuition' has been suggested. Here is a field which psychology has barely touched but which it cannot ignore indefinitely. It is precisely because psychologists have not greatly ventured into these difficult reaches that they have so little of interest to offer in explanation of all those types of mental activity which lead to the problem of form, such as language, music, and mathematics. We have every reason to surmise that languages are the cultural deposits, as it were, of a vast and self-completing network of psychic processes which still remain to be clearly defined for us. Probably most linguists are convinced that the language-learning process, particularly the acquisition of a feeling for the formal set of the language, is very largely unconscious and involves mechanisms that are quite distinct in character from either sensation or reflection. There is doubtless something deeper about our feeling for form than even the majority of art theorists have divined, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that, as psychological analysis becomes more refined, one of the greatest values of linguistic study will be in the unexpected light it may throw on the psychology of intuition, this 'intuition' being perhaps nothing more nor less than the 'feeling' for relations."[23]

Bloomfield and Sapir have frequently been contrasted. The quotations just cited reveal that Sapir was interested in much more than the arrangement of physical linguistic data with which Bloomfield was preoccupied. Sapir saw clearly that the task of linguistic analysis, ideally, was to account for the various kinds of knowledge, conscious and unconscious, which the native speaker has about the sentences and constructions of his language. His "mentalism", it may be remarked, is considerably richer than that of de Saussure, and it adumbrates the great interest in the mental component of grammar which characterizes the work of the transformational linguists. The views of Sapir, however, while certainly influential, were not the ones which dominated American linguistics in its period of early development. It was, rather, Bloomfield's views which informed the linguistic practice of most American linguists during this period – with the result that the focus of analysis was on the act of speech and the aim of analysis was to account for speech-utterances.

[23] *Selected Writings...*, p. 156 *(Ibid.)*.

III

At this point it may be worthwhile to consider some of the possible causes and some of the consequences of the American preoccupation with speech. As is well known, American linguistics in its early development was devoted in considerable part to the study of the native Indian languages. These languages offered rare opportunities for investigation at the same time that they posed special procedural problems. In almost no case did these languages offer anything in the way of a written literature. The data, of necessity, consisted of spoken utterances. Although techniques for eliciting and transcribing these utterances became highly sophisticated, the gathering of a significantly large body of data was hemmed in by certain difficulties – chiefly those posed by considerations of time. In general, analysis was performed on what, by some standards, would be regarded as a rather meager, if not indeed an inadequate sample of the language being described. But the small corpus was not the only limitation which the particular field conditions imposed on the linguist. Perhaps because of the fact that the informants were usually linguistically naive – but in any case – it was required that he be used simply as a source of data. As a matter of procedure, none but the most rudimentary judgments that he might be able to make about his language were solicited; indeed, his judgments, if volunteered, were to be disregarded.[24] Whether this attitude to the metalinguistic competence of the informant arose out of the particular conditions in which American linguists worked or whether it followed from prior theoretical axioms, it is hard to say. The practical result, in any case, was to leave the linguist with only the elicited utterances to account for.

Against this background, various questions that might have arisen to make necessary the development of an interesting linguistic theory were suppressed. The question of grammaticalness, for example, did not really arise. The corpus was either regarded as grammatical by definition, or it was edited to ensure that it was grammatical. Moreover, questions of constructional homonymity or of various other relations existing between the sentences and constructions of the language were precluded by the decision to ignore native-speaker judgments. What did develop in this context, of course, was a set of analytic techniques for dealing with the corpus. And it may be suggested

[24] Cf. Leonard Bloomfield, *Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages* (Baltimore, Md., 1942, pp. 2–4); see also Zellig S. Harris, 'Distributional Structure', in Fodor and Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 48 f. (reprinted from *Word*, **10** 1954, 146–62). Not all American linguists operated with informants in such a restrictive manner. For an idea of a freer, more latitudinarian approach, see the remarks by Charles F. Hockett on Whorf's practice with a Hopi informant, in one of the discussions contained in *Language and Culture* (ed. by Harry Hoijer, Univ. of Chicago Press 1954, p. 230).

that the orientation of American linguistics toward "mechanistic" procedures developed from the fact that all that had to be accounted for was a body of physical data.

It may also be suggested that the historical order in which American linguistics tackled the various linguistic levels was an outgrowth of its restriction to a limited corpus. For there is a correlation between the amount of available data and the feasibility of analyzing the various linguistic levels. Progressively more data are needed to deal adequately with the phonemic, morphemic, and syntactic levels of a language. And this order is indeed the order in which American analytic techniques were developed and refined. It is perhaps worth noting in this connection that the codification of post-Bloomfieldian syntactic analysis was presented in a paper based largely on English.[25] One may also speculate that the requirement in post-Bloomfieldian linguistics to work up from the phonology, through the morphology, to the syntax and at no time mix levels was an artifact of the given field conditions. In other words, the notion that it was possible to devise a discovery procedure for analyzing languages may have developed as a corollary of the procedures which the field conditions imposed. These speculations aside, it remains quite clear that post-Bloomfieldian linguistics was preoccupied with accounting for the corpus of speech-utterances and, although, as we have seen, there is a recognition that it is the description of *langue* which is the goal of linguistic analysis, the unwillingness to associate with *langue* any mentalistic features whatever results in a conception of grammar which is quite narrow and, in a very real sense, uninteresting.

IV

It is a truism by now that the publication of *Syntactic Structures* marks an epoch in the development of American linguistic thought.[26] In this book and in subsequent publications by himself and his followers, Chomsky introduces a number of innovations.[27] It is not necessary to rehearse these here. What I do wish to comment on is the relation of transformational grammar to the general question of *langue* and *parole*. In the first place, for Chomsky a corpus of speech-utterances, i.e. a sampling of *parole*, is by no means the language. For one thing, such a sampling has an accidental character. Any description of it is thus bound to be inadequate or distorted in terms of the language at large, and any grammar that will generate the corpus will

[25] Rulon S. Wells, "Immediate Constituents", *Language* **23** (1947) 81–117; reprinted in Joos, *op. cit.*

[26] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, The Hague 1957.

[27] For an up-to-date bibliography, see N. Chomsky, 'Current Issues in Linguistic Theory', in Fodor and Katz, *op. cit.*

generate also a great many sentences beyond it.[28] But aside from these questions, there is the consideration that many of the facts which Chomsky thinks the grammar of a language should account for do not occur as such in speech-utterances. Essentially, these are the native speaker's judgments about his language. These judgments, referred to in the early literature on the subject as the native speaker's "intuitions", are currently referred to as his "competence" in the language, this to be distinguished from actual "performance" of it. By "competence" Chomsky refers to the various kinds of knowledge, conscious or unconscious, that a native speaker has about the sentences and constructions that he produces and hears. This knowledge includes such things as an understanding of the recursive character of sentence-formation, the ability to project from experienced sentences to competely novel ones, or what might be called the "creative" ability of a native speaker; it includes a notion of grammaticalness, the feeling that certain sentence- and construction-types are grammatically related, the apprehension of constructional homonymity, ambiguity, paraphrase relations, anomaly, and so forth. The point about all such knowledge is that it does not reflect itself as such in the actual sentences of the language. Its locus is the speaker's (and hearer's) brain, and obviously any approach to linguistic analysis which concerns itself with information of this kind may be called "mentalistic".[29] One purpose of a transformational grammar (with a semantic component added) is to throw light on abilities of this kind. Now the fact that these abilities are linguistically significant, coupled with the fact that they are mental functions, suggests that they correspond in some way with de Saussure's concept of *langue*.

Although there is a correspondence, there are also differences, however, between *langue* as conceived by de Saussure and "competence" as defined by Chomsky. It may be mentioned only in passing that for de Saussure *langue* is basically a social institution, distributed in the collective consciousness, whereas Chomsky seems to be interested in the purely individual nature of

[28] See N. Chomsky, in discussion following his paper, 'A Transformational Approach to Syntax' in *Third Texas Conference on Problems of Linguistic Analysis in English* (Austin, Texas 1962) p. 159.

[29] One could maintain of transformational relations in Harris' sense ("Co-occurrence and Transformation in Linguistic Structure", *Language* **33** (1957) 283–340, reprinted in Fodor and Katz, *op. cit.*), inasmuch as they are based on the occurrence privileges of the actual morphemes in sentences, that they could be discovered by an examination of the corpus itself. But this does not hold for Chomsky-type transformations, which are defined on abstract, non-terminal strings, not on actual sentences. For a discussion of this and other differences, see N. Chomsky, 'Current Issues...', p. 83. In any case, however, to account for the other aspects of "competence" it is clearly necessary to go beyond the actual corpus. Thus, the notions of grammaticalness, constructional homonymity, paraphrase, anomaly, etc. cannot be explained by a grammar based solely on a corpus.

competence. As for the particular constitution of *langue* as opposed to "competence", we may refer to Chomsky's own critique of the former in his Ninth Congress paper.[30] There he points out that for de Saussure *langue* "is basically a store of signs with their grammatical properties, that is, a store of word-like elements, fixed phrases, and, perhaps, certain limited phrase types". *Langue* is thus, according to Chomsky, basically taxonomic. It therefore cannot account for the projective, or creative ability of speakers, and it also fails to account for the various kinds of judgments which a native speaker is able to make about the sentences and constructions of his language. It thus appears that, outside of a few technical similarities, the correspondence between *langue* and "competence" consists merely in the fact that both are mental functions. Considered against the background of American linguistic development, however, the latter fact is crucial. It makes it possible to view the shift in orientation from the "mechanism" of Bloomfield to the "mentalism" of Chomsky as a return, with expected modifications, to the position so strongly urged by Ferdinand de Saussure and independently prosecuted by Edward Sapir.

Hunter College, New York

[30] "Current Issues...", p. 59 f.

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CONTENTS

J. F. STAAL / E. W. Beth 1908–1963 81

S. R. LEVIN / *Langue* and *Parole* in American Linguistics 83

S. HATTORI / The Sound and Meaning of Language 95

R. B. LEES / Turkish Nominalizations and a Problem of Ellipsis 112

W. MOTSCH / Grammar and Semantics 122

Reviews

EMMON BACH: *An Introduction to Transformational Grammars* (Rudolf de Rijk) 129

JERROLD J. KATZ and PAUL M. POSTAL: *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions* (J. F. Staal) 133

Publications Received for Review 155